

*City of San José*

## ***Coyote Valley Specific Plan***

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### **Summary of Environmental Focus Group Meeting #1 November 10, 2005 200 E. Santa Clara Street, Room T1446**

#### **Environmental Focus Group Members Present**

Craige Edgerton (Silicon Valley Land Conservancy), Brenda Torres-Barreto (Audubon Society), Juliana Chow (Audubon Society), Michele Beasley (Greenbelt Alliance), Pat Congdon (Open Space Authority), Melissa Hippard (Sierra Club), Brian Schmidt (Committee for Green Foothills).

#### **City Staff Present**

Sal Yakubu (PBCE), Darryl Boyd (PBCE), Susan Walsh (PBCE), Mike Mena (PBCE), and Sylvia Do (PBCE).

#### **Consultants Present**

Doug Dahlin (Dahlin Group), Roger Shanks (Dahlin Group), Paul Barber (KenKay Associates), Judy Fenerty (DJP&A), Bill Wagner (HMH Engineers), Chuck Anderson (Schaaf & Wheeler), Liza McNutty (Schaaf & Wheeler), and Eileen Goodwin (Apex Strategies).

#### **1. Welcome and Agenda Review**

The Coyote Valley Specific Plan (CVSP) environmental focus group meeting convened at 1:35 p.m. with 21 people in attendance. Eileen Goodwin of Apex Strategies provided an overview of the agenda. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss environmental issues related to the CVSP land use plan, triggers, jobs/housing scenarios, and hydrological management.

#### **2. Land Plan Development and Refinements**

Roger Shanks, with Dahlin Group, provided an overview of the CVSP. A lot of the CVSP work is proceeding simultaneously: the refinement of the transportation network, fiscal impact

analysis, the timing and phasing strategy, the shared schools and parks concepts, the refinement of the Greenbelt strategy, and the environmental impact report (EIR).

Roger described the CVSP composite framework, which includes Fisher Creek, a central focal lake, canal park, parkway, fixed guideway transit with a multi-modal transit station. He explained the Plan's goals for non-vehicular and vehicular circulation. Roger provided an overview of the CVSP's blue infrastructure, which includes hydrology and stormwater detention and filtration areas. Blue infrastructure consists of the focal lake, Fisher Creek, Coyote Creek, Laguna Seca, the urban canal, and bioswales. Roger also reviewed the plan's green infrastructure, which consists of neighborhood parks, community parks, shared use schools/neighborhood parks, dog parks, and recreational trails. Coyote Valley residents will be within a 10-minute walking distance to neighborhood parks and a 20-minute walking distance to community parks.

The plan currently includes sites for nine elementary schools, two middle schools, and one or two high schools on a 60-acre collegiate-style campus. Each 9-acre elementary school site would be collocated with a one-acre for park use only. Each elementary school has a capacity of 600 students. The two middle schools are located along the Central Commons. An "academic street" is envisioned between the two proposed high schools. The middle schools and high school(s) are all accessible by transit. Elementary schools are located in neighborhoods to facilitate walking to schools.

The environmental focus group provided the following questions and comments:

- Will there be other transit connections in addition to Caltrain? *Roger explained that Coyote Valley's multi-modal transit station has flexibility for future transit connections. High occupancy vehicles could connect Coyote Valley to other locations, such as the airport or the Santa Teresa light rail station. Sal indicated that the existing VTA bus route 68 would continue.*
- Would Fisher Creek be used for flood control purposes or as a wildlife habitat? *Fisher Creek would serve both purposes.*
- What is the riparian setback for Fisher Creek? *Darryl Boyd, with the PBCE Department, stated that setback requirements would conform to the City's riparian corridor policy. Chuck Anderson, with Schaaf and Wheeler, explained that although the buffer varies along Fisher Creek, the creek would have a 300-foot dedicated riparian cross section, at a minimum.*
- Is Laguna Seca planned for sports fields? *Doug responded in the affirmative. The Laguna Seca would have soccer and cricket fields.*
- Would like Laguna Seca to be a natural area or seasonal wetland, not sports fields. *Recommended accommodating more sports fields in the Greenbelt instead.*
- Urban edge agriculture is more compatible with lit sports fields than wildlife habitat.
- A wildlife corridor is not compatible with the Greenbelt's proposed recreational and urban edge agricultural uses. *Recommended locating the wildlife corridor in North Coyote Valley since there is more wildlife existing in the area than in the Greenbelt. North Coyote Valley has higher value areas for habitat. A wildlife corridor in North Coyote Valley would be more secure than in the Greenbelt and would have less conflict*

with residential uses. The wildlife corridor would also be a shorter cross-valley distance in North Coyote Valley than in the Greenbelt.

- Wildlife corridor overpasses are more successful than underpasses.
- Wildlife corridor overpasses should have vegetation.
- Doug suggested scheduling a field trip to investigate a potential location of wildlife corridor in North Coyote Valley. Focus group members interested in attending include Brenda Torres-Barreto, Juliana Chow, Pat Congdon, Craige Edgerton, Melissa Hippard, Dave Johnston, and Brian Schmidt.

### **3. General Plan Triggers and Jobs/Housing Development Scenarios**

Sal Yakubu, with the PBCE Department, explained the current General Plan triggers and the proposed jobs/housing development scenarios. The CVSP Task Force has expressed interest in understanding implications of alternative phasing scenarios, including financial feasibility, fiscal impacts, community character, timing of community features, economic development, and the citywide jobs/housing balance.

Darin Smith, with Economic and Planning Systems (EPS), indicated that EPS is currently analyzing the following five phasing scenarios:

- (1) Current General Plan triggers: 5,000 new jobs in Coyote Valley before any new housing development.
- (2) 2:1 concurrency: Housing is always constrained by 2:1 jobs/housing unit ratio throughout Coyote Valley build-out.
- (3) 10,000:5,000 concurrency: No more than 5,000 housing units may be developed until there are 10,000 jobs. Subsequent jobs and housing development would be market-driven.
- (4) Placemaking infrastructure: Jobs and housing development would be market-driven until major infrastructure is financed. Subsequent jobs and housing development would be at a 2:1 jobs/housing unit ratio.
- (5) Sequenced concurrency: No more than 3,000 housing units may be developed until there are 3,000 jobs. Once there are 3,000 jobs, no more than 10,000 total housing units may be developed until there are a total of 15,000 jobs. Subsequent jobs and housing development would be market-driven.

The environmental focus group provided the following questions and comments:

- When will the CVSP go to the City Council for consideration? *Sal indicated that the CVSP would go to Council in March 2006.*
- Preferred the 2:1 concurrency phasing scenario as it promotes smart growth.
- Recommended a phasing scenario combining the 2:1 concurrency and the current General Plan triggers.
- Preferred the current General Plan triggers since they promote smart growth.
- Preferred controlling development, not market-driven development. Supports budgetary triggers like those in the General Plan.

- Preferred developing existing opportunities and infill development before greenfield development.
- Would like to see other areas of the city developed first, such as North First Street and downtown.
- Phasing scenarios do not consider the CVSP's significant environmental impact. Would like to see the cost benefits of each phasing scenario.
- Would the selected phasing scenario support or substitute the General Plan budgetary triggers? *Darin stated that the Task Force has not yet made a recommendation regarding phasing scenarios. Darryl explained that the Task Force would not reach a conclusion until they see the fiscal analysis of the phasing scenarios.*
- How much of the CVSP could be protected from changes once it is written into the General Plan? *Sal explained that any part of a specific plan could be changed by City Council as a General Plan amendment.*

#### **4. Greenbelt Preservation and Agricultural Mitigation**

Brian Schmidt, with the Committee for Green Foothills, presented a handout regarding agricultural mitigation and Greenbelt preservation. The discussion points were as follows:

- (1) If developers propose converting Coyote Valley farmland to other uses, the developers must mitigate the lost farmland by preserving equivalent farmland on at least a one-acre for one-acre basis. The mitigation requirement must be part of any Specific Plan for Coyote Valley. Prime farmland must be mitigated with the preservation of similar prime farmland. 3,400 acres are currently slated to be lost; all of that acreage must be mitigated.
- (2) At the overall level of Coyote Valley, lost farmland must be mitigated at at least the one-for-one ratio, regardless of the subsequent use of the property. For specific kinds of property, such as high-density residential housing, the ratio could be changed, but any reduction for one type of property must be made up for by increases in mitigation by other land uses.
- (3) As much as possible of the farmland preserved as mitigation should be located in the Coyote Valley Greenbelt. Remaining farmland preservation areas should be as close as possible to Coyote Valley, which would be in Almaden Valley and south of Coyote Valley.
- (4) To avoid mismanagement of agriculture by landowners with little experience or interest in farming, an independent agency, not the landowners, should have exclusive management authority for preserved farmland. The agency will assume all costs and receive all revenues associated with farmland preserved as mitigation.
- (5) Part of the required mitigation should include management fees to defray administrative expenses incurred by the managing agency. These fees must not be more than a minor component of the required mitigation.

The environmental focus group provided the following questions and comments:

- Only land on the valley floor should count as prime agricultural land, not hillsides.

- Indication that Jim Musbach, with EPS, previously stated that 1,500 acres in the Greenbelt could be purchased for agricultural easements. Since the CVSP would develop 3,400 acres, the remaining 1,900 acres need to be mitigated elsewhere.
- Doug explained that the preliminary \$15 million figure for Greenbelt acquisition was established by looking at parcels without development potential.
- The Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) uses the State's definition of "prime agricultural land." *Darryl indicated that the EIR would use State guidelines to determine whether the 3,400 acres north of Palm Avenue are prime agricultural land or not and how much prime agricultural land needs to be mitigated. The EIR would analyze the Coyote Valley's existing conditions, per the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Staff will present a progress report regarding the EIR to Council in Spring 2006.*
- If the City of Gilroy can do 1:1 agricultural mitigation, San Jose should be able to do the same.
- Should also consider ways to preserve hillsides. Could establish a ratio to mitigate "X" hillside acres for every prime agricultural land that needs to be mitigated.
- What percentage of the water would be recycled? Concerned that Coyote Valley would have a deficient water supply. *Darryl stated that the EIR would analyze this issue to ensure that Coyote Valley has a sufficient water supply. Staff will present a progress report regarding the EIR to Council in Spring 2006.*

## 5. Next Steps/Adjourn

Future focus group meeting topics may include:

- (1) Draft specific plan
- (2) EIR
- (3) Agricultural mitigation
- (4) Water
- (5) Transportation
- (6) Phasing, jobs/housing
- (7) Sustainability
- (8) Wildlife corridor

Staff will coordinate a field trip to review the possibility of a wildlife corridor in North Coyote Valley area.

The next CVSP Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting will take place on Wednesday, November 30, 2005 from 3-5 p.m. at City Hall in room T332. Sal recommended that the environmental focus group reconvene in January 2006 after the draft specific plan has been released for public review. Darryl recommended that the focus group reconvene sooner to discuss agricultural mitigation, traffic transportation, the greening of the phasing, and financing information.